

REMARKS

Claims 10-15 are all the claims pending in the application. By this Amendment, Applicants cancel claims 1-9.

I. Restriction Requirement – Election Affirmation:

As requested by the Examiner, Applicants affirm the election (without traverse) to prosecute the invention of Group II, claims 10-15.

Applicants also cancel claims 1-9, without prejudice or disclaimer, since these claims are drawn to a non-elected invention.

II. Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 112(1st):

The Examiner rejects claims 10-15 under 35 U.S.C. § 112(1st), as containing subject matter which was not described in the specification in such a way as to enable one skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected, to make and/or use the invention. To address the Examiner's concerns, Applicants have implemented numerous amendments that are believed to more clearly recite the invention. The subject matter of the amended claims find explicit and straightforward support in the specification. Some of the specific amendments are discussed below.

A. *Independent Claim 10 – The Method:*

As amended, independent claim 10 recites a method that involves transferring the products together with the address information from a plurality of feed means to a single feed line via a transfer means. An exemplary embodiment of this feature is depicted in Fig. 9. Here,

the plurality of products 30a-30d are moved from feed units 1106A, 1106B (or plurality of feed means) to the main feed unit 1108 (or single feed line) via transfer units 1110A, 1110B (or transfer means). As the products move through the apparatus, and with reference to Fig. 11, address information (that is associated with the products) moves between memory areas ME11-ME22 of a control circuit.¹ The memory areas ME11-ME22 correspond to various regions of the apparatus. In this way, the products move together with the address information.

With reference to Fig. 12, each of the memory areas ME11-ME22 has a header a1 and slit data a2. For a particular memory area, the header a1 stores the address information of the last product to have passed the region associated with the particular memory area, and the slit data a2 stores the address information of the product that is presently positioned in the region associated with the particular memory area.² An example of moving address information from one memory area to the next (as the product moves) is discussed with reference to Fig. 16.³

Claim 10 recites that the sequence of the transferring step is determined in a specific manner. An exemplary embodiment of this determination will be appreciated with reference to Figs. 17 and 18, which are discussed in the specification beginning with the second full paragraph of page 25. Consider Fig. 17, which schematically depicts a process of the first transfer unit 1110A. Assume that the slit data a2 of the memory area ME15 includes address

¹ See, spec. paragraph bridging p. 19-20.

² Spec., p. 20, first full paragraph.

³ Spec., paragraph bridging p. 23-24.

information of the roll 30c depicted in Fig. 14 (Step S8A). This would indicate that the roll 30c is presently positioned in the transfer unit 1110A. Before this roll 30c is transferred to the main feed unit 1108, the controller 1506 first checks to see if the header a1 of the memory area ME16 includes address information of the roll 30b (Step S9A). This would indicate that the roll 30b (or preceding product) has been previously transferred by the transfer unit 1110B. Once the condition of Step S9A is satisfied, then the transfer unit 1110A transfers the roll 30c (or subsequent product) to the main feed unit 1108. Fig. 18 schematically depicts a process of the second transfer unit 1110B, which functions in a similar fashion.

In this way, a subsequent product (e.g., roll 30c), which has address information (e.g., block 1, slit 3) in a predetermined relationship to the preceding address information (e.g., block 1, slit 2) can be reliably transferred to the main feed line 1108. In the example above, the “predetermined relationship” is an increment of one for the slit number. Thus, the determination ensures that for a particular block number, the rolls 30a-30d are transferred to the main feed line 1108 in slit number order (i.e., block 1, slit 1 (roll 30a); block 1, slit 2 (roll 30b); block 1, slit 3 (roll 30c); and block 1, slit 4 (roll 30d), as shown in Fig. 14).

B. Independent Claim 13 – The Apparatus:

Independent claim 13, which is directed to an apparatus, is similar to claim 10. Thus, the explanation above with respect to claim 10 is also applicable to claim 13. For further clarification, Applicants point out that an exemplary embodiment of some of the recited means plus function limitations are depicted in Fig. 10. Here, the address information holding means

and the preceding address information holding means is the tracking data memory 1502 of the control circuit 1500. The product selecting means is the controller 1506. These elements, and their associated functions are discussed in the specification beginning with the paragraph bridging pages 18-19.

Applicants respectfully assert that those skilled in the art, in view of the present application, could practice the invention defined by claims 10 and 13.

III. Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 112(2nd):

The Examiner rejects claims 10-15 under 35 U.S.C. § 112(2nd) for the reasons noted at numbered paragraphs 10-11 of the Office Action.

With respect to claim 10, Applicants have implemented appropriate amendments to clearly indicate that the address information is added to the products (as opposed to the intermediate products).

Claim 10 is further amended by deleting the objectionable term “holding address information as preceding address information” in favor of *--storing a preceding address information in a memory associated with the transfer means, the preceding address information being the address information of a preceding one of the products that has been transferred to the single feed line--*. A similar amendment has been implement in apparatus claim 13.

Claims 10 and 13 are further amended by deleting the objectionable term “before” (recited at line 13 of claim 10, and line 16 of claim 13).

Applicants believe that claims 10 and 13 have be appropriately amended to overcome the objection concerning the limitations directed to the selection of another product, how this selection is related to the address information, and the term “predetermined relationship.” For further clarification, the Examiner’s attention is respectfully directed to the discussion in the last two paragraphs of section II.A. above.

For these reasons, Applicants respectfully assert that the pending claims more particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter regarded as the invention, thereby overcoming all of the raised rejections under § 112 (2nd).

IV. Claim Objection:


The Examiner objects to claim 13 because it recites the term “steps.” Applicants amend claim 13 by deleting the objectionable term.

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

AMENDMENT UNDER 37 C.F.R. § 1.111
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The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,



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